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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Afghanistan Engineer District—North

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Magness touts role of civilian engineers to bloggers

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Col. Thomas H. Magness, the commander of Afghanistan Engineer District-North, discussed the mission of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Afghanistan with U.S.-based bloggers in a teleconference sponsored by the Department of Defense on April 28. Magness spoke from his office on the Qalaa House compound in Kabul, Afghanistan. Photo by Joe Marek, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

KABUL – Col. Thomas Magness highlighted the contributions of civilian engineers to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' mission in Afghanistan during a live teleconference with U.S.-based bloggers on Thursday, April 28.

Magness, the commander of Afghanistan Engineer District-North, was the featured speaker on the DOD Live program. The public discussions with bloggers are part of the U.S. Department of Defense's initiative to reach out to online and social media outlets. Magness fielded questions from U.S.-based bloggers about the qualifications and training of Afghans working for the Corps of Engineers, the use of sustainable fuel sources and road construction, among other topics.

The colonel discussed the role of civilian engineers in response to a question by Sandra Erwin, a blogger for National Defense magazine. She asked whether the Corps of Engineers encountered difficulty in attracting highly qualified U.S. civilians to serve in Afghanistan.

"We're hearing some comments in Washington about the lack of specialized engineering skills, especially from the civilian side," Erwin said. "And sometimes that they bring military engineers who may be engineers in, you know, submarines, but not necessarily know anything about construction or energy."

Magness, who previously served as commander of the Los Angeles and Detroit districts, countered that the district is staffed with "best of the best" civilian engineers the Corps of Engineers has to offer. "I really believe we've got a varsity team on a varsity-level mission," he said.

"These are professional engineers. They have all the credentials and certifications that are necessary to do the mission, so we have not had to bring in military engineers. It is the civilian workforce in the United States for the Army Corps that has stepped forward and volunteered for this mission. We also round that out with engineers from other agencies and other qualified engineers that wish to join the Army Corps just for this deployment," Magness said.

More about the roundtable is available at <http://www.dodlive.mil/index.php/category/bloggers-roundtable/>. Department of Defense officials said they expect to schedule Magness to speak during future bloggers roundtables to discuss different aspects of the mission.

Blog posts:

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ac/20110429/us_ac/8390197_army_engineers_building_a_new_afghanistan

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=63747>

<http://battleland.blogs.time.com/> "Illuminating Kabul" posted April 28, 2011, at 2:28 p.m.

<http://terrorism-online.blogspot.com/2011/04/army-engineers-help-to-rebuild.html>